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ABSTRACT

To develop this handbook, three Aboriginal teachers gathered extensive data through workshops; questionnaires; and research with Elders, Aboriginal parents, teachers, advocates, and others who work first-hand with children with special needs. The handbook opens by presenting the traditional Aboriginal perspective on disabled children--that they were considered a gift to show an appreciation of life, and that they were included in all parts of community life. The term "special education" and parents' rights concerning special education are explained. A story of an Aboriginal boy named Eagle with a serious hearing loss follows his progress through the Alberta (Canada) requirements for special education--screening, referral, assessment, program planning and implementation, program placement, appeals, children's services, health-related support services, transition planning, and school board policy. Eagle's story is used to demonstrate each step and the ways in which parents can become involved in their children's education. Roles and responsibilities are presented for family members, school staff, and community members. Three sections cover parent-school communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Two sections explain special education funding for reservation and nonreservation students. First Nations and Alberta support groups are listed, as are resources produced by Alberta Learning. Four appendices cover getting to know your child's school, special education definitions, and special education funding rates for the 2000-2001 school year for Alberta Learning and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (TD)

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A Handbook for Aboriginal Parents of Children with Special Needs

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THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL
ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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About the Cover Design[1]

Shane Calf is 14 years old. He is from the Siksika Nation. Shane is presently in Grade 8 and is the son of Sheila Calf. Shane is an experienced artist and has won several art contests. His work is known for originality and cultural components. When Shane was asked why he drew the front cover the way that he did, he replied, "Well, first of all I love drawing! When I was thinking of making a picture about special needs people, I thought it would be good to show a chief in a wheel chair, also some people have to use crutches, and a lot of Aboriginal people dance with staffs, and I also made sure that each part of the picture had nice designs. The sun that I drew shows the four directions, that's why it has four skinny lines and a small dark part in the middle, it is to show the sun!"

[1] Reprinted with permission of Shane Calf.

This document is intended for:

Students		Parents	✓
Teachers	✓	Stakeholders	✓
Administrators	✓	Other	

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- The principal writers, Daphne Crowchief-McHugh, Kathy Yellowhorne-Breaker and Freda Weasel Fat-White of the Siksika Board of Education
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Introduction

By
Daphne Crowchief-McHugh
Kathy Yellowhorne-Breaker
Freda Weasel Fat-White

Parents of children with special needs are often frustrated when their children enter the school system. This becomes more evident if the children and parents are Aboriginal, as they must sometimes deal with both the provincial education system and the federal education system. If they live on reserves, the services are not always the same as if they lived in urban areas. This handbook will help parents become more aware of what happens to students who live on or off reserves.

Let us introduce ourselves . . . We, the writers, are three Aboriginal teachers: Daphne Crowchief-McHugh from the Siksika Nation, Kathy Yellowhorne-Breaker from the Pikanii Nation and Freda Weasel Fat-White from the Kainai Nation. We all live on the Siksika Nation and work for the Siksika Board of Education. We have all taught in regular classrooms; however, presently we are involved in special education programs within the Siksika Board of Education. We are all pursuing higher education and are enrolled in masters degree programs. We found that writing this book provided us with an excellent opportunity to work with and learn from Aboriginal parents. We also learned from other people who are advocates of children with special needs.

The handbook was written after extensive data gathering was done from Elders, Aboriginal parents, teachers, advocates and others who work first hand with children with special needs. The ideas and suggestions come directly from them and reflect their hopes, dreams, frustrations and compassion for the children. In this resource, the term Aboriginal refers to the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people — Indians, Metis people and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Part of our data gathering included:

- a questionnaire sent out to all Aboriginal community schools in Alberta
- a two-day workshop/meeting with Aboriginal parents of children with special needs in Southern Alberta
- a one-day workshop/meeting with Elders in Southern Alberta
- a one-day meeting with the Aboriginal Disabilities Society of Alberta along with parents of children with special needs in Northern Alberta
- a one-day meeting with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on funding
- a two-day research/data gathering at the law and education libraries at the University of Calgary
- a one-day research/data gathering at the education library at the University of Lethbridge
- an Elders' forum at the Treaty #7 Education Conference
- a field review questionnaire completed and returned by parents, guardians, teachers, administrators and liaison workers.

We also received assistance from many parents who dropped by and answered or asked questions concerning their children.

We would like to thank the Aboriginal Disabilities Societies in Alberta for their kind support and assistance. We would also like to thank all those Elders who gave us guidance and vision, the parents and advocates who supported this project and who were straightforward and honest with their opinions.

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This is
How it is . . .

Within our Aboriginal communities, we are faced with many challenges, one of which is providing quality care to our children with special needs. Our Elders say, "long ago we did not treat our disabled children differently, they were special, special in a way that they were a gift. There was a reason why disabled children were put on the earth and they were included in all parts of the community. These children are a gift to show an appreciation of life. Disabled children are on loan to us and we must nurture and love them."

Our Elders say, "Nowadays some parents have lost their traditional parenting skills and values." They say, "Today's parents need to relearn parenting skills, whether they are traditional or modern. They must be learned then practised." They say, "Aboriginal parents must become actively involved with the education process, by working with the people who make the decisions about their children's education." The Elders say, "Including disabled children was always a part of First Nations' traditional philosophies."

With this in mind as we look toward the future of our children with disabilities, we must have a . . .

"LINK TO THE PAST,
FOCUS ON THE FUTURE
AS WE DEAL WITH THE PRESENT."

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Special Education

All children are unique and learn differently. Special education is about providing extra support to help your children. In order to know how to help your children, the school may assess them to find out their strengths and areas of need. This information will help the school develop programs that are suitable for your children.

An important part of making programs to suit your children is the individualized program plan (IPP). An IPP is a plan of action. The IPP shows what your children know and what they can do. The IPP also explains what your children will be learning and how they will be learning. You can help to set up the IPP and you should meet with the school several times a year to review and make changes to the IPP. School staff and parents are all an important part of making the IPP a success.

Parent Rights

As a parent, you have rights that allow you to have a say in your child's special education program. These rights give you a chance to be involved in developing the program for your child. You have rights, but along with these rights come responsibilities. If you meet these responsibilities, then your child will have a better chance at getting the best possible education. (See pages 16–17 for a list of parents' responsibilities.)

- **You have a right** to be involved in the decisions affecting your child's education.
- **You have a right** to be told all about the school's programs.
- **You have a right** to be consulted before your child is placed in a special education program.
- **You have a right** to give or deny your permission, in writing, for any formal testing to be done on your child.
- **You have a right** to be an informed member of your child's education team. Team members may include parents, school staff, consultants and sometimes the student.

- **You have a right** to get information on your child from teachers, principals and the local school board.
- **You have a right** to ask for reports on your child's progress during the school year.
- **You have a right** to look at all the information in your child's school files.
- **You have a right** to appeal (talk to higher authorities) if you do not agree with decisions on where your child is placed. (See pages 36–41 for more information on appeals.)

Eagle and His Story

The Elders often say,
"You're too busy labelling things . . .
saying things like this is a problem
or so-and-so is a problem."
Elders don't do that.
They take a person for what he is worth.
They say there's no such thing as
someone who is good for nothing.
We're all worth something.[2]
(Russell Wright, Siksika Elder)

Eagle has a serious hearing loss. The hearing loss was identified before he started school. Eagle's mother was concerned about his hearing and she took him to the public health nurse. The public health nurse sent Eagle to his family doctor who referred Eagle to an ear/nose/throat doctor. The ear/nose/throat doctor sent Eagle to an audiologist (hearing assessment specialist) who confirmed that Eagle had a serious hearing loss. As a result, it was decided that he could benefit from the use of hearing aids. It was also decided that he should use all means of communication (hearing, gestures, facial expression, body language, speech reading).

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[2] From *Those who know: profiles of Alberta's Native Elders* by D. Meili. Reprinted with permission.

Eagle went to Sundance School. His teacher referred him for testing to help pinpoint his strengths and areas of need. Eagle was assessed by the school's learning assistance teacher and the REACH (Regional Education Assessment and Consultation) assessment team from the Calgary Board of Education. The three specialists on the REACH team were an education consultant for the deaf or hard of hearing, an educational audiologist and a speech/language pathologist.

The educational audiologist showed Eagle's teacher how to use an FM system to help Eagle hear better in the classroom. An FM system is a device that carries sound from a microphone that the teacher wears, to Eagle's hearing aids. The education consultant for the deaf or hard of hearing worked with Eagle's teacher and teacher aide to help develop his listening skills. The speech/language pathologist assisted with language and speech development. The school and the consultants decided that extra reading help was needed. His classroom teacher found lots of written material with many visual aids and she ordered reading programs for the computer.

After Eagle was assessed, the school called a meeting to develop an individualized program plan (IPP) for him. An IPP is a written plan that shows what a school plans to do to meet the special needs of a student. (See pages 11–12 for more on IPPs.) The principal, Eagle's classroom teacher, his teacher aide, his learning assistance teacher, his education consultant for the hearing impaired and his mother came to the meeting. These people made up the IPP team. The team decided that Eagle would have two 20-minute sessions per day with his teacher aide. The programming and materials for the sessions would be provided by the classroom teacher and the consultants, based on his IPP goals.

Eagle's mother was concerned that Eagle would continue to lose his hearing. Both the school and Eagle's family were worried about how they would communicate with him when that happened, so Eagle, his family and the school decided that the team would learn American Sign Language. Eagle's classmates are also learning some signs and they are enthusiastic about this. Eagle's self-esteem seems to have risen as a result of the students' interest in communicating with him. The IPP team will meet again in a month to discuss Eagle's progress.

Eagle is now in Grade 4 and gets along well with his classmates. Sometimes they complain that he hits others on the playground. His behaviour is being closely watched by the teacher aide and school counsellor.

The school and Eagle's mother decided that, with his hearing problems, it would be too confusing for Eagle to learn his Native language. They decided that Eagle would learn to drum in the Native way, because he would be able to feel the beat. He could also participate in Native arts and crafts, and learn about his culture and traditions.

Eagle's Grade 4 teacher will meet with his Grade 5 teacher in June to discuss his needs. Eagle is interested in cars and trucks and wants to take some automotive classes in high school. He would like to be a mechanic.

School board policy will make sure that teachers continue to talk about Eagle's needs as he moves from one grade to the next. This transition planning is an important part of Eagle's program.

Alberta Learning — Requirements for Special Education

Alberta Learning has set out requirements for educating students with special needs. These requirements were made so that all students in Alberta have access to equal opportunities for their education. These requirements must be followed by school jurisdictions within Alberta.

To help with the explanation of the requirements, "Eagle's story" will be used to show each step and how his parents or other parents can become involved with their children's education.

The requirements are:

Screening for Early Identification

From the earliest grade, usually kindergarten or Grade 1, school staff will ask you for information about your child's development. They will want information about your child's hearing, speech, vision and medical background. This information is collected at your local health centre when your child goes for immunization shots or by your family doctor.

Eagle's mother became concerned about Eagle before he entered school. She took him to a nurse who discovered his progressive hearing loss. When Eagle started kindergarten, his mother told Eagle's teacher about his medical condition.

Referral

School jurisdictions must have written procedures for assessing students to identify who may be at risk for learning problems. This information is then passed on to you, to staff and to any others who need to be aware of the steps involved in referrals.

School jurisdictions need to involve you and your child at each level of the referral process.

As Eagle went from kindergarten to Grade 4, his teachers made sure that they met his mother. At these meetings, the teachers discussed why they were referring Eagle for testing. They explained how the testing would be done. Eagle's mother was asked to give permission for the testing.

Assessment

School jurisdictions will make sure that assessments are completed so that the school can set the most appropriate education goals, use the best teaching strategies and provide suitable services to support your child's education program.

Assessment is a process of gathering information about a student in order to better understand learning strengths and needs, and to develop an appropriate educational program.

Assessments may be informal or formal.

- Informal assessments are often given by the teacher. They assess things like math skills and reading ability.
- Formal assessments include testing in the areas of intelligence, personality and behaviour. These tests are given by people who are specially trained.

The special education teacher at the Sundance School tested Eagle and then met with his mother and the other teachers to explain the results. The tests helped point out Eagle's strengths and areas where he needed help. The testing helped the staff at the school create an appropriate educational program for Eagle.

Program Planning and Implementation

School jurisdictions will make sure that an individualized program plan (IPP) is made for each student who has been identified as having special needs and that the program plan is followed. (IPPs are sometimes referred to in some schools as IEPs or individual education plans.) An IPP includes:

- information about the student's level of learning
- the strengths and needs of the student
- short and long-term goals
- testing procedures
- medical or health-related information
- dates to review the IPP and the results

- recommendations
- related services to be provided
- transition plans (see page 13)
- special provisions required in the classroom.

The school jurisdiction will make sure that you and your child are part of the IPP planning process.

In Eagle's case, the team met to write the IPP. They will review the IPP at each parent-teacher interview and at the end of the school year. Every person on the team knows what Eagle's program is and how it will help him.

Program Placement

School jurisdictions are responsible for making sure that students are placed in programs where their needs can best be met.

School jurisdictions will meet with you before your child is placed in a special education program.

Appeals

School jurisdictions will make every effort to resolve disputes, misunderstandings or concerns when dealing with students with special needs.

School jurisdictions will make sure that you understand the process of appeals and solving disputes.

Children's Services

School jurisdictions will work with parents and others who provide services in the community to make sure that services are co-ordinated and delivered to students with special needs.

Health-related Support Services

School jurisdictions will give staff written procedures on how to provide health services to students with special needs.

School jurisdictions will make sure that the student's IPP includes information about health-related concerns.

Transition Planning

School jurisdictions will work closely with the student, family and community to make sure that students move successfully from one level of schooling to another; for example, from kindergarten to elementary and from junior high to senior high.

Eagle's Grade 4 teachers will meet with the Grade 5 teachers in June to discuss what his program was in Grade 4 and to plan his Grade 5 program. Eagle's teacher will also meet with staff from the local junior high school so that they can plan for the day he enters junior high school. Eagle has shown an interest in cars and trucks, and says one day he would like to be a mechanic.

School Board Policy

School jurisdictions will have written policies and procedures, which have been made in consultation with parents.

The school jurisdiction will make sure that its policies are in line with Alberta Learning's provincial policies.

Family Members — Roles and Responsibilities

As parents and families of a child with special needs, you play a major role in the development of your child's program. Listed below are some of the roles and responsibilities.

Students

ROLES — Each student has unique needs and is in contact with many people. Students need to learn to get along with others. Older students may take a more active part in planning their education programs. Elders feel that students must believe in themselves and try to the best of their abilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- participate in the development of the IPP, when appropriate
- attend meetings, when appropriate
- help set long-term goals; for example, high school students may indicate where they want to live, what kind of work interests them and what they like to do in their spare time
- make an effort to be on time and be at school every day.

Parents

ROLES — You play a big role in the special education system. Along with dealing with many people at the school level, you must also find out how to get other services for your child in the community. Parents face many challenges in trying to cope from day to day with their children. You need to understand the school process of setting up programs for your child.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- be a member of the IPP team
- gather information about your child (doctor reports, other reports, etc.) and share it with those concerned
- ask questions about any words you don't understand
- find out which organizations can help you learn more about your child's needs (see pages 45–48)
- keep in touch with your child's teacher and the school
- learn as much as you can about school rules
- ask school staff to explain any part of the program that is unclear
- attend all meetings and speak up about things that concern you
- encourage your child to go to school everyday

- encourage your child to talk to you and/or the teacher about any problems
- set aside time to work with your child on his or her school goals (from the IPP)
- get information on other programs that are available for your child within the school jurisdiction.

Support Person

ROLES — A support person may include a neighbour, friend or a member of the extended family. In Aboriginal communities, extended families may play an important role in a child's life. There may be one family member who is considered a leader. This person is usually consulted and asked for assistance to help voice concerns for other family members. There can be a lot of contact between the child and the extended family. Sometimes, extended family members are the caregivers for the child.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- be a member of the IPP team
- be a support to the child and parents
- attend meetings to voice concerns and preferences
- share your views on the child's and family's needs
- visit agencies that seem suitable for the child
- help to choose the best possible placement.

School Staff Members — Roles and Responsibilities

Principals and Vice-Principals

ROLES — The principal and vice-principal help ease the movement of children into special education programs in a way that is positive. They must make sure that all services are in place and co-ordinated with other community agencies. The principal gives a teacher the primary responsibility for developing the IPP.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- be members of the IPP team
- ensure that IPPs are prepared, implemented and evaluated
- ensure support personnel, appropriate materials and inservice training are provided as required, given the needs of the student
- establish procedures for involving parents in the IPP process.

Teachers

ROLES — Teachers provide an IPP for students with special needs in their classes. Teachers then follow that plan in their daily lesson plans. In their classes, teachers must have an understanding of each student's background and value his or her culture. Teachers also keep in touch with you, the parents, about any concerns regarding your child.

Regular Classroom Teachers

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- be members of the IPP team
- share information collected during the information gathering stage
- be aware of the parents' or guardians' expectations for their children's programs
- be aware of students' special needs
- make changes in their teaching that help students with special needs learn
- maintain accurate records of students' progress
- maintain ongoing communication with parents and other teachers
- promote understanding, acceptance and respect of cultural differences
- may provide information or advice about culture and culturally sensitive behaviour and issues to non-aboriginal school staff
- let the administrator and/or the special education teacher know if any student is having problems.

Special Education/Resource Room Teachers

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- be members of the IPP team
- provide assessment to determine student strengths and areas of need

- generate ideas and suggestions for program modifications and/or adaptation
- provide advice about materials and resources
- plan and carry out instructional programs
- develop strategies for assessing and communicating student progress
- maintain ongoing communication with parents and other teachers
- promote understanding, acceptance and respect of cultural differences
- may provide information or advice about culture and culturally sensitive behaviour and issues to non-Aboriginal school staff
- visit parents in homes, where appropriate.

Teacher Assistants/ Paraprofessionals

ROLES — Teacher assistants support the teacher in the implementation phase of programming. The teacher assistant works alongside, and under the direction and guidance of the teacher, providing supportive and complementary services.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- participate with the IPP team
- promote understanding, acceptance and respect of cultural differences
- may act as cultural liaison between the school and community
- may provide information or advice about culture and culturally sensitive behaviour and issues to non-Aboriginal school staff
- know the material and how the student will be taught
- help students with learning activities under the direction of the teacher
- assist with the modification of materials and instructional methods
- record any progress toward individual instructional goals
- problem solve on the spot
- maintain ongoing communication with teachers
- may communicate with parents as directed by the teacher.

Guidance Counsellors

ROLES — The school counsellor encourages the growth and development of all students in three key areas:

- personal/social issues
- education planning
- career awareness/exploration.

The school counsellor, together with the school and community, provides students with:

- the teaching of social skills
- assistance during times of high need
- individual student planning
- school community partnerships.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- help deal with the personal/social needs of the student with special needs
- make contact between parents and the school
- provide parents with information about other services
- provide career awareness, exploration and investigation for students.

Consultants

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- participate with the IPP team, if requested
- help determine learning strengths and needs
- develop strategies for incorporating therapy needs into classroom routines
- provide advice about materials and resources
- train staff to implement strategies
- provide technical assistance
- act as a resource and support to families

- maintain ongoing communication with the teacher/team
- provide assessment, as necessary
- be aware of cultural differences and use an interpreter, if need be, when testing children.

Native Family-School Liaison Workers

ROLES — A Native family-school liaison worker's role is to act as a resource and to foster a relationship between families and the school jurisdiction. They offer assistance to families whose children may be having problems either in school or at home.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- support students and families who are having problems
- make home visits to look into problems and find solutions
- when invited, sit in on meetings as a resource person for the school and families
- have knowledge of student/family cultural background
- provide information to families about the agencies that are available to help
- provide direct home contact, before a family is brought to the attention of other social agencies

- act as a liaison for all resources within the community
- host family life education workshops.

School Board Members

ROLES — If a board determines that a student is in need of a special education program, then the student has a right to receive a program that is designed to meet those needs. The board must inform you of the process to be followed if you wish to appeal your child's placement or program.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- establish policies regarding the provision of special education programs
- ensure that a program is provided for special education students
- provide special transportation for the student from home to the school, if necessary
- employ teachers and other support staff to provide special education programs
- establish an appeal procedure for parents who wish to appeal a placement decision.

Community Members — Roles and Responsibilities

Social Workers

ROLES — Social workers provide children, families and communities with a wide variety of financial, counselling, organizing and support services. For example, if you qualify, a financial benefits worker helps you or your child obtain financing. If your child is disabled, a handicapped children's services worker helps you obtain and pay for services to meet the child's special needs. If your child needs protection from abuse or neglect, a child welfare worker provides services to keep your child safe and to help you protect your child. Or if your community needs help to meet the needs of the citizens, a community development worker helps the community strengthen or create the needed services.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- provide information about agencies and services, and help with referrals and applications
- go along on visits to agencies; attend meetings
- if the child is in child welfare care, supervise planning, decisions, day-to-day care, and services provided to the family and child

- help with Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), guardianship and trusteeship if the adult child is severely handicapped
- provide follow-up once the student graduates.

Community Health Services

ROLES — The local health centre will take care of many of the health concerns of your child. If you live on reserve, Indian Affairs – Medical Services Branch (MSB) provides funding for public or community clinics or health centres. But if your child has status, he or she may qualify for certain services, equipment and medication through MSB on or off reserve. Please see your public or community clinic or health centre for more information on the services provided for your child. If you live off reserve, the Alberta provincial government provides funding to Regional Health Authorities for local clinics or health centres.

Band or Education Portfolio Holders

ROLES — Band or Education Portfolio Holders hold important positions in Aboriginal communities. They look after community and educational needs of all their band/settlement members including children with special needs. The following list includes some of the responsibilities of the Band or Education Portfolio Holder in Aboriginal communities and Metis settlements.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- make sure the band's/settlement's mission statement reflects the special needs of children and adults
- advocate for programs and funding from the federal and provincial governments (when applicable) for children and adults with special needs
- make sure all band/settlement/ community buildings can accommodate children and adults with special needs
- hold annual inservice or training for all human resources personnel on the special needs of children and adults in the community
- provide a means of transportation for children with special needs and their parents to attend all functions in the community
- have a special needs representative on community committees

- act as a go-between for the school and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)
- have an interagency committee to co-ordinate services
- make sure that community schools provide adequate services and programs for the children, for accountability purposes
- make sure recreation and leisure programs are provided for children with special needs
- make sure there is an appeal process in place.

Parents — Talking with the School

General Tips

You may avoid going to your child's school because you did not have good experiences when you went to school yourself. But it is important for you to go to your child's school and to find out what the school is doing to meet your child's needs.

The following suggestions were made by Aboriginal parents who had to deal with schools.

- Come to the school — the school belongs to your child.
- Visit your child's school anytime throughout the school year. At the beginning of the school year, ask your child's teacher if there are any procedures about visiting the classroom.
- Let your voice be heard by the teacher and, if need be, by the administration. If you have a concern, continue to speak up as it is the only way positive changes will happen.
- Ask to sit in on classes to see what is happening.
- Talk with other parents who have children in special education programs.
- Look for local parent support groups and find out about other resources.

- Make an appointment with the teacher, if possible, so the teacher will be free to see you, to discuss any specific concerns.
- Tell the teacher to feel free to phone or write if you are unable to meet.
- Tell the teacher how you may be contacted if you don't have a phone.
- Get to know the teacher by name and make sure he or she knows how to contact you.
- Read the school newsletters as they often contain valuable information that concerns your child.
- Become familiar with the school's policies and procedures about attendance, discipline and suspensions.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Go to all parent-teacher conferences.
- Keep all school information in one place so it is handy for meetings at the school or when seeing others in the community about your child.
- Ask that the teacher, principal, liaison worker or school counsellor meet with you in your home if you would feel more comfortable about meeting there.
- Volunteer to teach a craft or special skill from your culture.

Planning for IPP Meetings or Parent/Teacher Interviews

The following tips may help you get ready for an IPP meeting or parent/teacher interview.

BEFORE THE MEETING OR INTERVIEW:

- find out what will be discussed and who will be at the meeting or interview
- if you want, have an advocate parent, teacher or liaison worker to help and support you at the meeting or interview
- write down concerns before the meeting or interview and go over them with your support person
- write down your goals for the IPP and what you expect from your child and from the school
- if you want, invite family members that will be a support for you.

AT THE MEETING OR INTERVIEW:

- your support person is there to assist you if you have any questions
- ask questions about the program — if anything is unclear to you, feel free to ask for more details
- ask how you can help your child at home with school goals.

Schools — Talking with Parents

Tips

The following are suggestions made by many parents who felt intimidated by the school meetings they attended. One parent said, "All too often I did not understand what was being said so I just signed where they said to sign for approval of testing, placement, etc."

Schools are encouraged to:

- be respectful of cultural differences and Aboriginal traditions
- provide a translator if the parents don't speak English well
- offer to meet with the parents in their homes
- when meeting in the student's home, get to know the parents before discussing concerns or issues
- explain the testing procedures when discussing assessment with parents; some parents may not understand what is involved
- provide workshops on a variety of issues or areas of concern
- loan parents videos on special needs topics
- involve the whole community in supporting school efforts
- encourage parents to be with a support person at meetings, if they want
- encourage parents to be direct and honest about their concerns

- suggest that parents write down their concerns before coming to meetings
- send home agendas of meetings so parents are aware of what will be covered
- send home a copy of the IPP before the meeting to give parents the chance to review it and have someone explain it to them, if necessary
- consider helping parents to make arrangements for baby-sitting, when possible
- provide transportation for parents with no means of transportation
- use Elders to provide support for parents and to help explain the school's concerns
- dress casually to make parents feel comfortable
- be informal when conducting meetings
- include all family members and extended family members if the parent wishes
- use plain language when talking to parents
- use pictures when describing or explaining
- have fact sheets explaining testing, assessments and definitions regarding the child's condition
- provide a full-time school/parent liaison worker

- hold IPP meetings to review student progress and problems
- use the local radio station or community newsletter to make announcements
- send letters and use the school newsletter to provide school information
- avoid holding meetings in the gym — it is intimidating to get up and talk in the auditorium
- encourage personal communication between the teacher and parents
- have social functions such as tea dances, pow-wows to meet community members, where appropriate
- get parents involved in extracurricular activities to make them feel needed and valued (one school had all teachers phone their students' parents with a personal invitation and had 90 per cent parent attendance)
- award prizes at Christmas and at the end of the school year to students who return the most parent signatures indicating that notes and letters went home
- give parents copies of test results to keep them informed about their children. Some parents may use this information to seek help outside the school. Some parents may have their support person read the test to them.

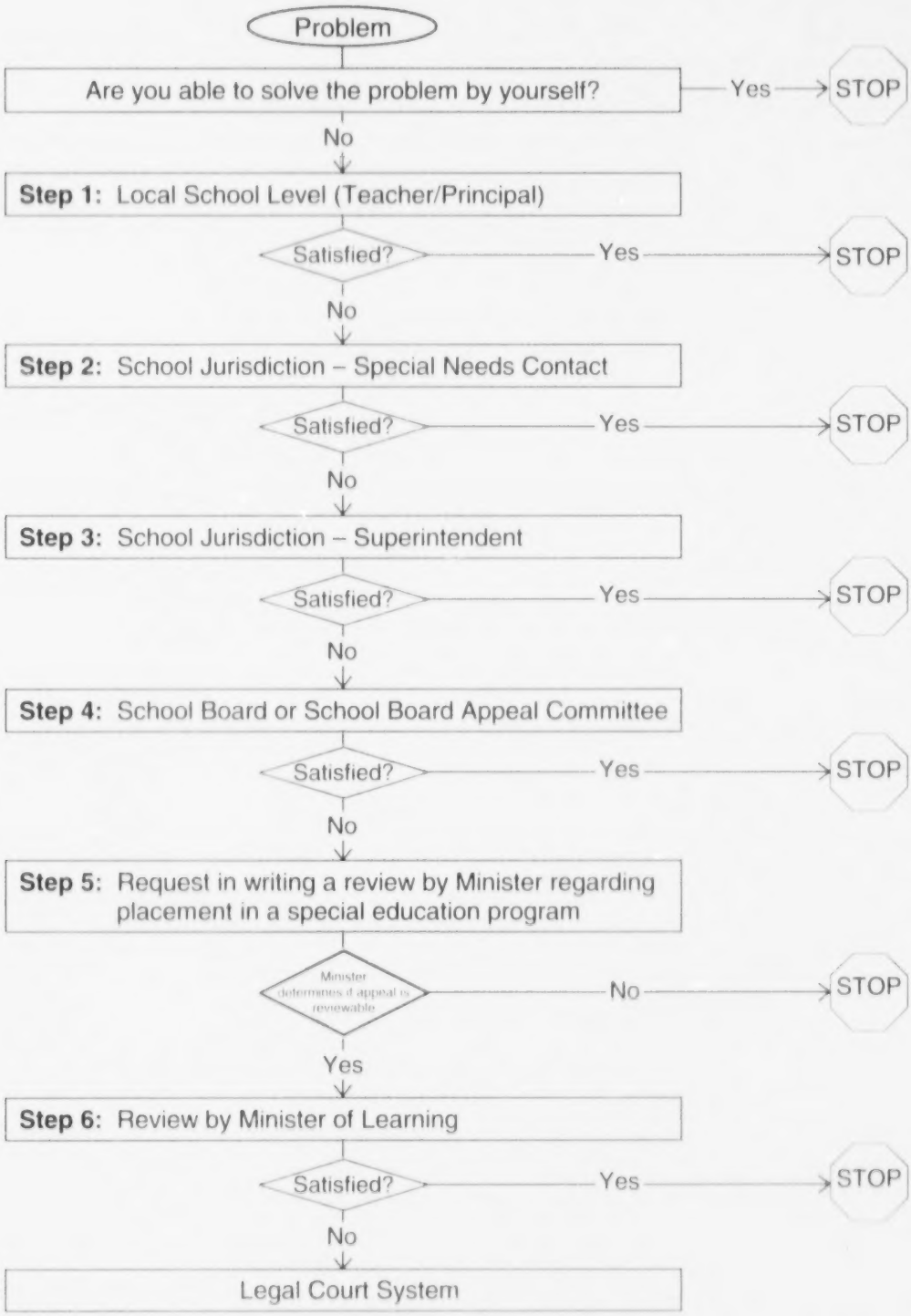
Problem Solving and Dispute Resolutions

When a problem happens within your child's school there are steps that can be taken to solve the situation.

Alberta Learning policy requires that school boards have procedures in place to hear appeals.

For federally run (on reserve) schools, there is not one policy that is used for all reserves. This is because each reserve is different and each has their own policies in place. For more information about your reserve school's policies on problem solving and dispute resolution, contact your local school staff and ask to see their school policies.

Although these policies are different for federally run schools, these schools may want to adopt Alberta Learning guidelines. Alberta Learning suggests that any dispute should be first dealt with at the place where it has happened.


Problem
Are you able to solve the problem by yourself?
Yes
STOP
No
Step 1: Local School Level (Teacher/Principal)
Satisfied?
Yes
STOP
No
Step 2: School Jurisdiction – Special Needs Contact
Satisfied?
Yes
STOP
No
Step 3: School Jurisdiction – Superintendent
Satisfied?
Yes
STOP
No
Step 4: School Board or School Board Appeal Committee
Satisfied?
Yes
STOP
No
Step 5: Request in writing a review by Minister regarding placement in a special education program
Minister determines if appeal is reviewable
No
STOP
Yes
Step 6: Review by Minister of Learning
Satisfied?
Yes
STOP
No
Legal Court System

STEP 1: If a problem occurs and does not seem to be ending, then you can ask for a meeting with the teacher and the principal.

STEP 2: If you are not satisfied with what happens at the meeting, you can go beyond the principal to school board office staff. Find out who is in charge of students with special needs. Write this person a letter requesting a meeting. Make sure that you include any additional information regarding the situation.

STEP 3: If you are not satisfied with the help you receive at Step 2, then you can write to the superintendent of schools requesting a meeting.

If you feel that your concerns have not been met at the school level or school board level, then, if both parties agree, a third party can be called in to listen to both sides of the situation. This is called mediation. The third person must be acceptable to both parties and will help both sides try to find common ground for a solution. Mediation is not a required part of Step 3 and parents may go directly to Step 4.

STEP 4: If you are not satisfied with Step 3, you should ask for a hearing by the school board or the school board's appeal (problem solving) committee. Ask the superintendent for copies of the school board's appeal procedures. You will have to write a letter asking for a hearing. After receiving your letter, the school board will make sure that the meeting is set up and that you are notified about where and when the meeting will take place. At this meeting, you will be able to present your case.

These four steps are referred to by Alberta Learning as the "local appeal procedure." The local appeal procedure can be used to solve any problems regarding your child's special education program.

STEP 5: If the problem is about your child's placement in a special education program that none of the previous steps have solved, then you have the right to write to the Minister of Learning for a review of the board's decision.

Before the Minister of Learning looks at the school board's placement decision about your child, you must have gone through all the previous steps. For more information about this, contact the Regional Office and Native Education Branch at (780) 427–2952.

STEP 6: If the Minister of Learning decides to review the problem, the Minister will:

- name a review committee to assist in the process
- notify you about the way the review will run and the steps that will be taken.

The review committee will:

- prepare a summary of information and share it with you and the school board
- review any disagreements you may have with the information that was presented in the summary of information
- prepare a report and recommendations for the Minister of Learning.

The Minister of Learning will:

- make a decision (the Minister's decision is final)
- write you a letter about the decision.

If you feel that your problem has not been solved, then you can go through the court system.

Reminder: The problem solving and dispute resolution procedure is for provincial schools only. As noted earlier, on page 36, this procedure does not necessarily apply to band-operated schools under Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

Alberta Learning — Special Education Funding

The Alberta Government, through the Alberta Learning department, distributes funds to help schools provide programs and services for students with special needs. All local school jurisdictions decide how the funds are divided to schools and how the funding is spent. The school jurisdiction uses these funds to hire staff, get teacher resources, specialized materials and equipment, and pay for any outside education-related services. School jurisdictions make decisions on how to spend funds in their schools.

Mild/Moderate Disabilities Funding
Every school jurisdiction receives the same amount of funding for each student to provide an education for the student. It is called Basic Instruction funding.

Schools and school jurisdictions are expected to use a part of the Basic Instruction funding to provide the right programs and services for students with special needs.

Severe Disabilities Funding
This funding is provided to school jurisdictions and funded accredited private schools for each student who fits the definition of severe disabilities. See Appendix B, pages 57–60 for a list of

the definitions. These are the definitions used by Alberta Learning and schools. These definitions are technical and you should consult your child's teacher for a fuller explanation.

The funding is used to provide a school program and an IPP that can meet the needs of the student with severe disabilities.

This funding also provides for other costs such as staffing, learning resources and equipment that students need.

ECS (Early Childhood Services) Severe Disabilities Funding
This funding is provided to school jurisdictions and approved operators of ECS programs for children with severe disabilities who are at least two years and six months old (by September 1) but younger than six years old.

This funding is available for a maximum of three years and is intended to prepare children for entry into Grade 1.

If you have any questions about funding for students with special needs, please contact your local school board office or the Special Education Branch at (780) 422–6326.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada — Special Education Funding

The Canadian Government, through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding for students from Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 12 who live on reserve. Included in this funding is special education programming for eligible students.

INAC provides funding to the First Nation Education Authorities to operate a school or schools on reserves and to the provincial school jurisdictions located near the reserves. The special education funding is approved on an individual student basis and each student must meet the criteria of one of the eleven special education categories.

Generally speaking, special education funding is used to provide an enriched program which meets the student's individual needs. This may take the form of special education teachers, teaching assistants, special materials and equipment.

Students who live off reserve are funded through Alberta Learning.

If you have any questions about funding for children with special needs, please contact your local school, school board office, First Nation or the INAC office at (780) 495–6685. See Appendix D, page 66 for details about INAC's special education funding.

Support Groups
First Nations' Support Groups

Aboriginal Disabilities Society of Alberta
Suite 205A, Hys Centre
Box 49, 11010 – 101 Street
Edmonton, AB T5H 4B8
Telephone: (780) 448–2378
Fax: (780) 448–2384

Aboriginal Disabilities Society of Alberta
Suite 130, Canada Place
Box 13, 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5J 4C3
Telephone: (780) 448–3711
Fax: (780) 495–3184

Alexander Health Services
Box 3570
Morinville, AB T8R 1S3
Telephone: (780) 939–4787
Fax: (780) 939–2951

Bent Arrow
10117 – 150 Street
Edmonton, AB T5P 1P2
Telephone: (780) 481–3451
Fax: (780) 481–3509

Bigstone Health Centre
Box 1020
Desmarais, AB T0G 0T0
Telephone: (403) 891–2000
Fax: (403) 891–2623

Blood Tribe Handicapped Disabled Services and Society
Box 118
Standoff, AB T0L 1Y0
Telephone: (403) 737–2888
Fax: (403) 737–2877

Calgary Native Disabled Society
#15, 3200 – 14 Avenue N.E.
Calgary, AB T2A 6L4
Telephone: (403) 207–6816
Fax: (403) 207–6819

Driftpile Health Centre
Box 120
Driftpile, AB T0G 0V0
Telephone: (403) 355–3931
(403) 355–3960
Fax: (403) 355–2055

Duncan's Health Centre
Box 125
Brownvale, AB T0G 0L0
Telephone: (780) 597–3777
Fax: (780) 597–3920

Enoch Cree Nation Health Services
Box 60
Enoch, AB T7X 3Y3
Telephone: (403) 470–5440
Fax: (403) 470–0683

Gateway Parent Association
11728 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
Telephone: (780) 454–0701
Fax: (780) 454–0843

Hobbema Indian Health Services
Box 100
Hobbema, AB T0C 1N0
Telephone: (780) 585–3830
Fax: (780) 585–2203

Horse Lake Health Centre
Box 303
Hythe, AB T0H 2C0
Telephone: (780) 356–3013
Fax: (780) 356–2587

Kapawe'no Health Services
Box 10
Grouard, AB T0G 1C0
Telephone: (780) 751–2284
Fax: (780) 751–2363

Metis Child and Family Services
10437 – 123 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 1N8
Telephone: (780) 452–6100
Fax: (780) 452–8944

Native Counselling Services of Alberta
#800, 10010 – 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5E 1M4
Telephone: (780) 423–2141
Fax: (780) 428–0178

Siksika Disabilities Services
Box 1100
Siksika, AB T0J 3W0
Telephone: (403) 734–5197
Fax: (403) 734–5110

Sturgeon Lake Band Office
Box 757
Valleyview, AB T0H 3N0
Telephone: (780) 524–3307
Fax: (780) 524–2711

Sturgeon Lake Health Centre
Box 747
Valleyview, AB T0H 3N0
Telephone: (780) 524–3717
(780) 524–5520
Fax: (780) 524–2903

Sucker Creek Health Centre
Box 65
Enilda, AB T0G 0W0
Telephone: (403) 523–4390
Fax: (403) 523–5934

Swan River Health Centre
Box 71
Kinuso, AB T0G 1K0
Telephone: (780) 775–3544
Fax: (780) 775–2002

Alberta Support Groups

International and Intergovernmental Relations (includes Associate Minister of Aboriginal Affairs)
Room 404, Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue N.W.
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Telephone: (780) 427–2585
Fax: (780) 422–9023
Toll-free: Dial 310–0000 and ask for 427–2585

Alberta Association for Community Living
11724 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
Telephone: (780) 451–3055
Toll-free: 1–800–252–7556

Alberta Association for the Dependent Handicapped
Box 1353, Main Post Office
Edmonton, AB T5J 2N2
Telephone: (780) 481–8294

Alberta Associations for Bright Children
Room 1280, 6240 – 113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 3L2
Telephone: (780) 422–0362
Toll-free: Dial 310–0000 and ask for 422–0362

Alberta Children's Services, Handicapped Children's Services
503, John E. Brownlee Building
10365 – 97 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3W7
Telephone: (780) 427–4354
Fax: (780) 427–0256

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities
707, 10339 – 124 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 3W1
Telephone: (780) 488–9088

Alberta Learning, Special Education Branch
10th Floor, East Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0L2
Telephone: (780) 422–6326
Fax: (780) 422–2039
Toll-free: Dial 310–0000 and ask for 422–6326

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
Suite 102, 12310 – 105 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5N 0Y4
Telephone: (780) 454–9867
Toll free: 1–800–661–3470

Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association
1102, 10025 – 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 1G4
Telephone: (780) 423–3138
Fax: (780) 425–6277

Alberta Society for Visually Impaired
Box 72063, Ottewell Post Office
Edmonton, AB T6B 3A7
Telephone: (780) 962–8128

Alberta Teachers' Association
Special Education Council
11010 – 142 Street
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Telephone: (780) 447–9400

Autism Society of Alberta
101, 11720 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5
Telephone: (780) 453–3971

Canadian Council of the Blind
69 Grand Meadow Crescent
Edmonton, AB T6L 1A3
Telephone: (780) 462–8879

Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA)
204, 10045 – 98 Street
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 2E7
Telephone: (780) 532–3305
Fax: (780) 539–3567

Canadian Paraplegic Association Alberta
#401, 320 – 23 Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB T2S 0J2
Telephone: (403) 228–3001

Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta
325, 10106 – 111 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0B4
Telephone: (780) 471–3706
Toll free: 1–800–363–2807

Edmonton Association of the Deaf
11319 – 61 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6H 1M3
Telephone: (780) 439–1822
TTY: (780) 436–4639

Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta
#145, 11343 – 61 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6H 1M3
Telephone: (780) 448–0360
Fax: (780) 438–0665

Alberta Learning Resources

Alberta Learning has produced the following resources that provide more information on special education.

To order these resources, contact:

Alberta Learning
Special Education Branch
10th Floor, East Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0L2
Telephone: (780) 422–6326 in Edmonton or toll-free in Alberta by dialling 310–0000
Fax: (780) 422–2039

Alberta Learning
Customer Service and Marketing
Learning Resources Distributing Centre (LRDC)
12360 – 142 Street
Edmonton, AB T5L 4X9
Telephone: (780) 427–5775 in Edmonton or toll-free in Alberta by dialling 310–0000
Fax: (780) 422–9750

Awareness Series **(1995)**

This series of 15 information brochures helps teachers, students and parents handle extraordinary learning and medical conditions in the classroom. Each brochure includes a brief definition, identifiable symptoms, general classroom management strategies and contacts. The topics include:

- allergies
- asthma
- autism
- cerebral palsy
- deafness and hearing loss
- diabetes
- Down's syndrome
- emotional disturbances
- epilepsy
- fetal alcohol syndrome
- learning disabilities
- muscular dystrophy
- spina bifida
- Tourette syndrome
- visual impairments.

Available for $4.55 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

From Position to Program: Building a Comprehensive School Guidance and Counselling Program: Planning and Resource Guide **(1995)**

This resource and planning guide is written primarily for school counsellors, teachers and administrators involved in establishing comprehensive school guidance and counselling programs and services. It includes:

- a general model and its characteristics
- three models for the delivery of a program and associated roles
- key issues facing school counsellors
- an exemplary program at each school level
- suggestions for designing a program
- ideas and strategies for assessing a program.

Available for $17.75 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Funding Manual for School Authorities in the 1999/2000 School Year: A Manual for School Jurisdictions, Private Schools and Private ECS Operators

This manual assists school jurisdictions, charter schools, private ECS operators and private schools in accessing education funding from the province of Alberta.

The manual explains what funding is available to school authorities in the 1999/2000 school year and the conditions and requirements that apply. This manual is updated annually.

Available from the Alberta Learning web site at [http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca/funding/manual992000/].

Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs

This guide sets out Alberta Learning's requirements and expectations for the development and delivery of programs for students with special needs.

Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Learning.

Partners During Changing Times: An Information Booklet for Parents of Children with Special Needs **(1996)**

This information booklet for parents of children with special needs provides a general overview of how parents can be involved in the education of their children. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of parents, the school's rights and responsibilities, relevant legal parameters and funding sources to support the delivery of special education programs and services.

Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Learning.

Programming for Students with Special Needs **series:**

- ***Teaching for Student Differences*** **(Book 1) (1995)**

  Highlights strategies for differentiating instruction within the regular classroom for students who may be experiencing learning or behavioural difficulties, or who may be gifted and talented. It also describes a process for modifying the regular program and includes forms to assist in teacher planning.

  Available for $12 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

- ***Essential and Supportive Skills for Students with Developmental Disabilities*** **(Book 2) (1995)**

  Includes developmental checklists for communication skills, gross and fine motor skills, as well as charts and checklists which provide a continuum of life skills by domain (domestic and family life, personal and social development, leisure/recreation/arts, citizenship and community involvement, career development). It replaces the Alberta Learning curricula (1983) for educable mentally handicapped, trainable mentally handicapped and dependent mentally handicapped students.

  Available for $13 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

- ***Individualized Program Plans (IPPs)*** **(Book 3) (1995)**

  This resource describes a process for IPP development and includes strategies for involving parents. It provides information on writing long-term goals and short-term objectives. Forms and checklists are included to assist in planning. Transition planning is also addressed, along with case studies and samples of completed IPPs.

  Available for $7.10 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

- ***Teaching Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*** **(Book 4) (1995)**

  Includes information on the nature of hearing loss, various communication systems, program planning and teaching strategies, and a section on amplification and educational technologies which includes hints for troubleshooting hearing aids and FM systems.

  Available for $8.50 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

- ***Teaching Students with Visual Impairments*** **(Book 5) (1996)**

  This resource offers basic information to help provide successful school experiences for students who are blind or visually impaired. The information in this book addresses:

  - the nature of visual impairment
  - educational implications
  - specific needs
  - instructional strategies
  - the importance of orientation and mobility instruction
  - the use of technology.

  Available for $4.30 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

- ***Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*** **(Book 6) (1996)**

  This resource provides practical strategies for regular classroom and special education teachers. Section I discusses the conceptual model and applications of the domain model. Section II includes identification and program planning, addressing early identification, assessment, learning styles and long-range planning. Section III contains practical strategies within specific domains including metacognitive, information processing, communication, academic and social/adaptive. Section IV addresses other learning difficulties including attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder and fetal alcohol syndrome/possible prenatal alcohol-related effects. The appendices contain lists of annotated resources, test inventories, support network contacts and blackline masters.

  Available for $20.40 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Teacher Resources Catalogue **(annual)**

Available at no cost from the Special Education Branch of Alberta Learning.

Teaching Students with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Possible Prenatal Alcohol-related Effects **(1998)**

This document provides educators with a basic understanding of characteristics associated with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and possible prenatal alcohol-related effects (PPAE). The sections include:

- a general overview of the diagnostic procedures
- the prevalence of FAS and PPAE
- the physical, educational and behavioural characteristics
- specific strategies designed to enhance the educational, social, behavioural and psychological development of students with FAS and PPAE
- an annotated list of other teaching resources.

Available for $6.25 + GST from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Appendix A[3]

Getting to Know Your Children's School

The quality of education your children receive depends largely on good administrators, effective teachers and caring parents who are committed to their educational development.

As Albertans, your children have the right to an education regardless of where they live or what their needs are. As parents, you have the right to play an active role in your children's education.

It is your responsibility to secure for them the best possible education. Your views as parents and community members can influence the curriculum.

To participate fully, however, you need to know how your local schools and the larger system work. Parents who know what they want for their children are better equipped to make good educational choices. You need to recognize the characteristics of effective schools and to work with your schools to make sure they are in place.

Does Your Child's School

- provide a warm friendly place where children and adults feel welcome, secure and stimulated to learn?
- show respect for your community values, cultural views, linguistic backgrounds by reflecting these in its staffing, curriculum and school activities?
- welcome and nurture effective communication between staff and parents?
- encourage your participation in making decisions and solving problems that affect your child's education?
- adopt a student-centred learning approach and encourage your children's co-operative interaction as well as their self-directed activities?
- recognize your child as an individual, with unique needs and preferred learning style?
- define clear standards of behaviour for children, and administer consistent and fair discipline with logical consequences?

Do You As A Parent

- show interest by following up on your child's assignments?
- ensure regular attendance?
- support home reading programs?
- recognize the value of an equal partnership with the school by participating as a classroom volunteer or an advisory committee member?
- attend school events, such as open house, festivals or parent-teacher interviews?
- take the initiative to meet teachers and other school staff for positive communication — not only when there is a problem?

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[3] From *A Parent's guide to help children succeed: seeking a balance* by Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education & Training. Reprinted with permission of the Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education & Training.

Appendix B

Early Childhood Services (ECS) – Grade 12 Special Education Definitions for 1999/2000

The following definitions are provided by Alberta Learning to assist school jurisdictions, private schools and Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators in determining appropriate coding for the Student Information System (SIS) and eligibility for Alberta Learning funding. These definitions are subject to change for future school years.

Mild/Moderate Disabling Conditions

Mild Mental Disability

The student with a mild mental disability is usually delayed in most academic subjects and social behaviours as compared to his or her same-age peers.

Any student designated as having a mild mental disability should have an intelligence quotient (IQ) in the range of 50 to 75 ± 5 as measured on an individual intelligence test, have an adaptive behaviour score equivalent to the mildly delayed level on an adaptive behaviour scale; e.g., American Association on Mental Deficiency Adaptive Behavior Scale, Progress Assessment Chart, Vineland, and exhibit developmental delays in social behaviours.

Moderate Mental Disability

The student with a moderate mental disability requires significant modification to basic curriculum, but is able to profit from instruction in living/vocational skills and may acquire functional literacy and numeracy skills.

Any student who is designated as having a moderate mental disability should have an intelligence quotient (IQ) in the range of approximately 30 to 50 ± 5 as measured on an individual intelligence test and have an adaptive behaviour score equivalent to the moderately delayed level on an adaptive behaviour scale; e.g., American Association on Mental Deficiency Adaptive Behavior Scale, Progress Assessment Chart, Vineland.

Emotional/Behavioural Disability

The student with a mild to moderate emotional/ behavioural disability exhibits chronic and pervasive behaviours that are so maladaptive that they interfere with the learning and safety of the student and other students.

Emotional/Behavioural Disability (cont'd)

Typically, behavioural disabilities are characterized by a number of observable maladaptive behaviours:

a. an inability to establish or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers or adults
b. a general mood of unhappiness or depression
c. inappropriate behaviour or feelings under ordinary conditions
d. continued difficulty in coping with the learning situation in spite of remedial intervention
e. physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
f. difficulties in accepting the realities of personal responsibility and accountability
g. physical violence toward other persons and/or physical destructiveness toward the environment.

Learning Disability

The student with a learning disability usually has average or above average intelligence but has specific learning disabilities which interfere with normal academic learning.

Learning disabilities* is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders due to identifiable or inferred central nervous system dysfunction. Such disorders may be manifested by delays in early development and/or difficulties in any of the following areas: attention, memory, reasoning, co-ordination, communicating, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, social competence and emotional maturation.

Learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual, and may affect learning and behaviour in any individual, including those with potentially average, or above average intelligence.

Learning disabilities are not due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps; to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantage; although they may occur concurrently with any of these.

Learning disabilities may arise from genetic variations, biochemical factors, events in the pre- to perinatal period, or any other subsequent events resulting in neurological impairment.

* This is the official definition adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC). Reprinted with permission.

Hearing Disability	The student with a mild to moderate hearing disability is one whose hearing condition affects speech and language development and interferes with the ability to learn. A student with a mild (26 to 40 decibels) to moderate (41 to 70 decibels) hearing disability will have an average hearing loss of 26 to 70 decibels unaided in the better ear over the normal range of speech. The normal range of speech is between 500 Hz and 4000 Hz.
Visual Disability	The student with a mild to moderate visual disability is one whose vision is so limited that it interferes with the student's ability to learn or the student requires modification of the learning environment to be able to learn. A student who is designated as having limited vision should have a visual acuity of less than 20/70 (6/21 metric) in the better eye after correction and/or a reduced field of vision.
Communication Disability	The student with a communication disability has significant difficulty in communicating with peers and adults because of a disability in expressive and/or receptive language, and/or disabilities in speech including articulation, voice and fluency. *This category was previously known as speech and language impairment.*
Physical or Medical Disability	The student with a mild to moderate physical or medical disability is one whose physical, neurological or medical condition interferes with the ability to learn, or who requires modification of the learning environment to be able to learn. The existence of a physical disability or medical condition, in and of itself, is not sufficient for the student to be designated in this category; the condition must impact upon the student's schooling.
Multiple Disability	The student with a multiple disability has two or more non-associated mild to moderate disabilities which have a significant impact upon his or her ability to learn. Some disabling conditions are closely associated so would not be designated under this category. For example, students with hearing disabilities frequently have communication disabilities, and students with mental disabilities almost always have both academic and communication disabilities.

Severe Disabling Conditions

Severe Mental Disability

The student with a severe mental disability has severe delays in all or most areas of development. A student in this category frequently has other disabilities including physical, sensory, medical and/or behavioural. This student requires constant assistance and/or supervision in all areas of functioning including daily living skills, and may require assistive technology.

A student who is designated as having a severe mental disability should have an intelligence quotient (IQ) of 30 ± 5 or less as measured on an individual intelligence test and have an adaptive behaviour score equivalent to the severe to profound level on an adaptive behaviour scale; e.g., American Association on Mental Deficiency Adaptive Behavior Scale, Progress Assessment Chart, Vineland.

Note: For an ECS child this may mean little if any functional adaptive behaviour and/or an inability to initiate meaningful play.

This category was previously known as severe dependent mental disability.

Severe Emotional/ Behavioural Disability

The student with a severe emotional/behavioural disability displays chronic, extreme and pervasive behaviours which require close and constant adult supervision, and other intensive support services in a highly structured environment in order to function in an education setting. The behaviours significantly interfere with both the learning and safety of the student and other students.

Students with the following characteristics usually qualify in this category:

- dangerously aggressive, destructive, violent and impulsive behaviours, including severe conduct disorders
- self-stimulation, self-abuse and/or aphasic behaviour
- psychosis including schizophrenia, manic depression, or obsessive compulsive disorders.

Severe Emotional/ Behavioural Disability (cont'd)

A clinical diagnosis by a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or chartered psychologist is required, in addition to extensive documentation of the nature, frequency and severity of the disorder by school authorities. The effects of the disability on the student's functioning in an education setting should be described. An ongoing treatment plan should be available and efforts should be made to ensure that the student has access to appropriate mental health and therapeutic services.

A clinical diagnosis of a behaviour disability is required but not necessarily sufficient to qualify under this category. Some diagnoses not of sufficient severity to qualify include: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), attention deficit disorder (ADD), fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), possible prenatal alcohol-related effects (PPAE) and oppositional defiant disorder (except for the most extreme and pervasive instances).

Note: Students with autism should be reported under Severe Physical or Medical Disability — including Autism rather than Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability.

Severe Multiple Disability

The student with a severe multiple disability has a combination of two or more non-associated, major (moderate to severe) mental and/or physical disabling conditions which result in functioning as low or lower than that associated with a severe primary disability, and who requires special programs, resources, and/or therapeutic services.

A student with a severe mental disability and another associated disability is not designated under this category, but is designated under severe mental disability.

A student with a severe emotional/behavioural disability and another associated disability is not designated under this category, but is designated under severe emotional/ behavioural disability.

Severe Physical or Medical Disability — including Autism

The student with a physical or medical disability is one whose physical, medical or neurological disability is so severe that he or she requires extensive personal assistance and modifications to the learning environment in order to benefit from schooling. A student with a severe mental disability and physical or medical disability is not designated under this category, but is designated under severe mental disability.

A medical diagnosis of a physical, medical or neurological disability is required but not necessarily sufficient to qualify under this category. Some physical or medical disabilities have little or no impact upon the student's ability to function in the school environment.

A student with severe autism or other severe pervasive developmental disorder is included in this category. A clinical diagnosis by a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, chartered psychologist, or medical professional specializing in the field of autism is required. A clinical diagnosis of autism is required but not necessarily sufficient to qualify under this category. Eligibility is determined by the functioning level of the student with autism.

In order for a diagnosis of autism to be made the student needs to evidence difficulties in three broad areas:

- social interaction
- communication
- stereotyped pattern of behaviour (i.e., hand flapping, body rocking, echolalia, insistence on sameness and resistance to change).

Deafness

The student with a severe to profound hearing loss is one whose hearing loss interferes with the use of oral language as the primary form of communication and has an average hearing loss of 71 decibels or more unaided in the better ear over the normal range of speech. The normal range of speech is between 500 Hz and 4000 Hz.

Blindness

The student with a severe visual disability is one whose corrected vision is so limited that it is inadequate for most or all instructional situations, and information must be presented through other means. A student with a severe visual disability (blindness) has a visual acuity ranging from 6/60 (20/200) in the better eye after correction, to having no usable vision or a field of vision reduced to an angle of 20 degrees. For designation under this category, a student would be eligible for registration with the CNIB.

Severe Communication Disability (For ECS Children Only)

The child with a severe communication disability has severe difficulty in communicating with peers and/or adults because of a severe disability in expressive and/or receptive language and/or total language. This may include little, if any, expressive or receptive communication skills. In order to qualify for severe communication disability funding, the assessment results must be less than or equal to the first percentile. One subset score alone, such as sentence structure or word structure, at or below the first percentile does not qualify as a severe communication disability.

If a child has a moderate to severe disability in a non-associated category (in addition to having a moderate to severe communication disability), then the child would be more appropriately identified as Severe Multiple Disability. This only applies for eligible ECS children and does not apply for students in grades 1 to 12.

A severe phonological delay does not necessarily qualify as a severe communication disability. A current speech language assessment report must be submitted with the Program Unit application. The speech language report should include a conclusion or summary statement which clearly indicates the level of communication disability (i.e., mild, moderate or severe). Recommended assessment instruments would be phonological, such as the Hodson, rather than articulation tests. Documentation which clarifies the level of intelligibility should also be included.

To facilitate communication skills, children in this category may benefit from small group work or clustering with same age peers, and a 400 hour program may be sufficient.

Institutional/ Homebound (Grades 1–12 only)	This category includes students of legal school age (ages 6–15) inclusive who require educational services in a non-school environment such as a group home, correctional institution, hospital or home.
Children's Services	Students may be placed in a group home or some other special setting by Alberta Children's Services.
Justice and Attorney General	Students who have committed an offence under the law are placed in a detention centre or some other legal setting.
Hospitals	Students who are receiving treatment in a hospital setting.
Homebound	Students who have a severe medical or other disability that prevents them from attending a school program and, therefore, must receive an education program in their home.
Gifted and Talented (Grades 1–12 only)	The student who is gifted and talented is one who by virtue of outstanding ability is capable of exceptional performance. This is a student who requires differentiated provisions and/or programs beyond the regular school program to realize his or her contribution to self and society.
Categories of Giftedness: A Description	A student capable of exceptional performance is one who demonstrates achievement and/or potential ability in one of several areas: **General Intellectual Ability** The student possessing general intellectual ability is consistently superior to the other students in the school, to the extent that the student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. Usually, this is the student who has a large storehouse of information about a wide variety of topics. The ability to abstract, generalize and utilize high level thinking skills is common in this type of student.

Specific Academic Aptitude
The student possessing a specific academic aptitude is the student who in a specific subject area, is consistently superior to the aptitudes of the other students in the school to the extent that the student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. Generally, this is the student who has an inordinate strength in a specific area, such as mathematical reasoning.

Creative or Productive Thinking
The student who thinks creatively or productively is one who consistently engages in divergent thinking that results in unconventional responses to conventional tasks, to the extent that the student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. Generally, this is the student who is unwilling to accept authoritarian pronouncements without critical examination.

Leadership Ability
The student possessing leadership ability is one who not only assumes leadership roles, but also is accepted by others as a leader, to the extent that the student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. Generally, this is the student who can be counted upon to carry out responsibilities and adapts readily to new situations.

Visual and Performing Arts
The student possessing visual and performing arts ability is one who consistently creates outstanding aesthetic productions in graphic areas, sculpture, music, drama or dance, to the extent that this student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program.

Psychomotor Ability

The student possessing psychomotor ability is one who consistently displays mechanical skills or athletic ability so superior to that of other students in the school that the student needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. Generally, this is the student with good control of body movement and excellent eye-hand co-ordination.

Appendix C
Special Education Funding for 2000/2001

Alberta Learning

The following are funding rates for the 2000/2001 school year and are subject to change for future school years.

Early Childhood Services (ECS)

Basic Instruction — $1,306 per child

Mildly or Moderately Disabled* — $1,444 per child (up to 10 per cent of ECS enrollment)

Severely Disabled (Program Unit funding)* — up to a maximum of $20,158 per child

Transportation* — ECS child with disabilities — $11.00 per round trip

*This funding is provided in addition to the Basic Instruction funding.

Grades 1–12

INSTRUCTION BLOCK

Basic Instruction — $4,096 per funded student (this amount includes $345 per student to support programs for students with mild and moderate special needs, including students who are gifted and talented)

Severe Disabilities*

- Severe Mental Disability, Severe Multiple Disability, Severe Physical or Medical Disability (including Autism), Deafness, Blindness — $12,307 per eligible funded student
- Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability — $9,453 per eligible funded student

Institutional Program funding — per approved contract

Regional Assessment Services — per approved contract

*This funding is provided in addition to the Basic Instruction funding.

SUPPORT BLOCK

Transportation:

- Special — for students with disabilities — $2,175 per funded student
- Weekend — for students with disabilities — $3,541 per funded student

Maintenance Allowance (Boarding) — $3,183 per funded student

Private Schools (including special education schools)

Basic Instruction — $2,458 per funded student (this amount includes $207 per student to support programs for students with mild and moderate special needs including those who are gifted and talented)

Severe Disabilities*

- Severe Mental Disability, Severe Multiple Disability, Severe Physical or Medical Disability (including Autism), Deafness, Blindness — $12,307 per eligible funded student
- Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability — $9,453 per eligible funded student

Resident Students of the Government (approved by Alberta Learning) — actual program costs as agreed to by the province

Institutional Program funding (provided for students in need of educational services in a non-school environment such as a group home, young offenders centre, hospital or home) — actual program costs as agreed to by the province.

* This funding is provided in addition to the Basic Instruction funding.

Appendix D
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

First Nations Schools — per full time student

*Basic Instruction	$5085
Minor Capital	$ 80
Low Cost Special Education	$ 180
High Cost Special Education	$ per student amount varies according to the total number of eligible students
Operation and maintenance	$ rate varies per First Nations school according to geographical location and distance from a major centre, and on the size of the school
Small School Factor	$ 900 at schools with less than 100 students
Northern Allowance	$ 200 at schools north of the 56th parallel

ECS students receive half of the funding allotted to full time students
2 years of ECS is funded — referred to as K4 and K5

*Basic Instruction includes teacher and teacher aide salaries and benefits; student supplies (text books, pencils, scribblers, etc.); instructional supplies (materials, etc. required by teachers in their instructional program); administration (directors of education, principals, school boards, etc.); curriculum development, library costs, language and reading programs. It is intended to cover all school operations except transportation, and the items listed above.

High Cost Special Education (HCSE)
Students must be eligible for one of the following eleven categories:

1. Severe Mental Disability
2. Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability
3. Severe Multiple Disability
4. Severe Physical or Medical Disability
5. Deafness
6. Blindness
7. Moderate Mental Disability
8. Mild Mental Disability
9. Severe Communication Disability
10. Exceptional (Gifted)
11. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

HCSE students are eligible for this additional funding:

1 – 4 full time students	$20,000 (total)
5 – 8 full time students	$ 5,000 each
9+ full time students	$ 1,200 each

e.g.	3 HCSE students	=	$20,000
	6 HCSE students	=	$30,000
	10 HCSE students	=	$42,400

Every 1 – 5 students who are eligible for categories 1 (Severe Mental Disability), 3 (Severe Multiple Disability), or 4 (Severe Physical or Medical Disability) an additional $15,000 is provided toward an instructional assistant.

Provincial School Boards

Funding methods are determined through the signed tuition agreements between the provincial school boards, Indian and Northern Affairs and/or individual First Nations. Actual tuition rates vary yearly and are based on calculations made from audited financial statements.

Tuition rates for ECS students are calculated according to the tuition agreement and vary from school board to school board. One year of ECS programming (K5) is offered for children who turn five by March 1 of each school year.

High Cost Special Education

Some school boards have provisions for special programming and additional staff outlined in the tuition agreement. Where provincial school boards have agreed to terminate these arrangements, the following guidelines apply.

For the 2000/2001 school year:

$11,948	per full time student for individuals who meet the criteria for HCSE categories 1, 3, 4, 5 or 6
$ 9,177	per full time student for individuals who meet the criteria for Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disability (category 2)

Private Schools

In order to be eligible for funding, private schools must be accredited by the provincial government. The full time per student funding level is determined by the lesser of the following rates: the average basic tuition rate established at the local provincial school boards and the basic rate at First Nations schools. Transportation is not provided to private schools. If the actual cost to attend a private school exceeds the allocated funding, the parents/guardians are responsible for all additional costs.

ECS students receive half the funding of full time students. One year of ECS programming (K5) is offered for children who turn five by March 1 of each school year.

High Cost Special Education
Actual costs for individual students are provided to accredited private schools if both the local First Nations school and the provincial school board confirm that they are unable to provide the program which the student requires, and if the student is eligible for one of the eleven HCSE categories.

Boarding Home Program
Communities where all grade levels are not offered are eligible for the Boarding Home Program. Students (mainly in Grades 10–12) are sent to larger centres for the school year.

Room and Board	$410 per month
Student Allowance	$ 20 per month
Seasonal Transportation	$ based on travel costs from the reserve to the nearest centre offering the educational program
Monthly Transportation	$ based on actual costs in the community

Transportation
Transportation services are provided for all students living on reserve and attending First Nations or provincial schools. Costs depend upon passenger load, bus size and distance travelled.

Financial Transfer Arrangements
First Nations who have signed Financial Transfer Arrangements (FTAs) administer all educational programs and have fixed funding levels with volume and price adjustments for the five year term of their agreement.

Footnote References

[1] Cover design for *Handbook for Aboriginal Parents of Children with Special Needs*, 1997, drawn by Shane Calf. Printed with permission of Shane Calf.

[2] *Those who know: profiles of Alberta's Native Elders* (p. 55), by D. Meili, 1991, Edmonton, AB: NeWest Publishers Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

[3] *A Parent's guide to help children succeed: seeking a balance* (pp. 8–9), by Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Training, 1993, Winnipeg, MB: Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Training. Reprinted with permission of the Native Education Directorate, Manitoba Education and Training.

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